



Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (3.40 pm): This afternoon I rise to address the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. As other speakers have raised, housing legislation in the state of Queensland—indeed, across the nation of Australia—is really about a balancing act. On the one hand, here in Queensland, of our 1.65 million households some 550,000 are rental households. Most are families with children but we are seeing an increase in lone persons. Particularly in the electorate of Glass House we are seeing an alarming increase in the newly single older female demographic through domestic or family violence or through marriage or relationship breakdown. On the flip side, 90 per cent of those households—some half a million—are provided by the private rental market. Some 13 per cent of Queensland taxpayers have indicated that they have a share in a private rental property.

To get this right, you have to weigh up the requirements and the needs of the tenants with the requirements and needs of the property owners. If you get that wrong, you very quickly will create a far bigger issue than what we are seeing unfold here in the state of Queensland already. As other members have mentioned—and we are no different in the electorate of Glass House—the number of rental properties currently available has decreased significantly. We have had numerous cases come through my electorate office where long-term renters in places like Maleny and Woodford have suddenly been told that those properties will no longer be available for rent. The owners have made the most of southerners coming north and the great property prices and those properties are now owned, not available to rent.

In the electorate of Glass House we do not have social housing. We have very little social housing. That 90 per cent of private rental would probably be closer to 97 or 98 per cent in the electorate of Glass House, so there has not been an alternative for those many families in particular whose rental property no longer exists. We have worked very hard with a number of them and fortunately have been able to assist them into public housing outside of the electorate, but to lose families who have been an intrinsic part of some of our communities over many years has been quite saddening. Again, it is very important that when debating, discussing, amending housing legislation we get the balance right, because we do not need to make it any harder for tenants to find rental properties or for owners to rent their property.

It is fair to say that when the government first put forward a number of amendments in this space under their Open Doors to Renting Reform consultative process there were a number of extreme elements that concerned property owners, that concerned the Real Estate Institute of Queensland, the REIQ, and that concerned us here in the LNP opposition. Fortunately, most of those more extreme changes have been removed from this legislation that we are debating here this afternoon. You could say that the government has done a far better job of getting the balance right.

There are, however, two areas that do concern the LNP and where we do believe there is overreach in favour of the tenant and not the lessor, the property owner. We will be moving a number of amendments: one to do with the proposed changes around periodic agreements whereby they can

no longer be reasonably ended by a lessor, as is the case under the current tenancy laws. The second will ensure that lessors are given the ultimate authority to refuse the right for a tenant to keep a pet without reason, as is the case under the current tenancy laws.

There are those two areas—periodic arrangements and pets. Whilst I understand the sentiment of the tenants, by again going too far in their favour we may find that properties that are currently available for rent may be taken off the market and sold and provided to a household looking to own and occupy rather than rent. I would be encouraging members on all sides of the chamber and the crossbench to support the shadow minister's amendments when they come before the House later on during the debate.

Let me finish where I commenced. It is very important that we get the balance right. As others have said, we are currently in the throes of one of the worst housing affordability situations I have ever witnessed in the state of Queensland. I have spoken previously about ways I believe the Palaszczuk Labor government can address that by looking at our planning laws, by looking at our land availability, by looking at opportunities that things like tiny homes present. In the absence of that, it is important that we get these laws right here this afternoon. Again, I urge all members to support the amendments being moved by the LNP.